



Tourism leaders of the future graduate in style

The many schools of the Educativo Profesional Intermedio, or E.P.I. have been conducting their individual commencement exercises over the past week, and those that will go on to work in the tourism or culinary industry were set an example by their faculty in the practice of what they were taught. In tourism and the restaurant industry, preparation and presentation are extremely important, and the commencement exercises of the E.P.I. Hospitality Management Unit in the school auditorium on Thursday evening were a fine example of both principles. The Hospitality Management program consists of two sectors, the FS, which is the Management program, and awards an Associate of Science degree. The Immediate Employment or IE sector results in an Associate of Applied Science in Culinary Arts. Many of these students already have jobs awaiting them in the kitchens of hotels and restaurants around the island, where they spent their apprentice year. Most FS students will go on to earn their Bachelors Degree.

Faculty member Randy Geerman acted as Master of Ceremonies for the evening, with an opening address by Undina Harms, which was a nostalgic and humorous review of the past year. General Director Arturo Oduber also welcomed the gathering and commended the thirty-seven graduate candidates on their achievement, encouraging them to remember that “thoughts that can be expressed in words, deeds and actions...Use your language and your actions positively...to achieve your desires.”

The Minister of Tourism, Edison Briesen, followed the director in addressing the gathering, and expressed that “Aruba is fortunate to have this area of specialization in their educational system.” He emphasized how important it was for the students to realize that tourism is a “people’s business” and that the quality of “future tourism in Aruba was in their hands. We deposit our trust and prosperity for a job well done.”

Keynote Speaker for the evening was the President of AHATA, (Aruba Hotel and Tourism Association) Jorge Pesquera. He wished the school congratulations on its silver jubilee anniversary, and commented that “it has come a long way in twenty-five years of evolution. It is clear to me that the future of hospitality education in Aruba is in very good hands, indeed.” AHATA often works closely with the school, such as in the case of finding placements for apprenticing students amongst its members, and he cited this as a part of the whole-hearted support the organization has for the school. In closing, He agreed with comments by the minister regarding the importance of attitude on the part of hospitality workers, towards not only their customers, but also their colleagues.

Addressing the gathering on behalf of the students were Randolph Ramsey and Monica Cha of the IE section, and Ayerim Lacle for the FS students. Ayerim was later named a co-winner of the Student Leadership Award, along with Miles Mercera.

Awards were issued for outstanding students, and since 2006, an outstanding teacher as well, and Lucie Kelly was named as Faculty Team Spirit winner 2007. Monica Cha and Diana Herrera in the FS section achieved highest grades in the graduating class. Pedro Kock received the award for School Spirit. John Contreras was named Most Improved Student among the FS division and Glen Baluarte from the IE division.

After the awarding of diplomas by faculty members lead by Andre Geerman, the students were transported to the Epilicious Restaurant, where a buffet feast prepared by faculty member Chef Kelly awaited them. Parents and friends applauded their accomplishment as they walked down the red carpet, a continuation of the “Academy Awards-Oscar night” theme of the evening, with which the restaurant and patio were decorated.

In the twenty-five years since the Hospitality Management School opened at the Bushiri Hotel, it has advanced “light years” according to a former teacher. In its new home, and as an official part of the E.P.I. system, its student body has grown from 175 students in 2005 to 475 in 2007. The graduating class of 2007 contained students from not only Aruba, but Dominican Republic, Philippines, Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Suriname, Jamaica and Holland. It has achieved true international status, and the staff of THE NEWS offers their congratulations to the future leaders of world tourism